

Next Generation Learning Models

In recognition of the importance of creating new learning models that are flexible and account for students' diverse learning needs, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is supporting the implementation of Next Generation Learning Models in schools and districts across the country.

The Executive Office of Education (EOE) has received a grant of \$650,000 from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to support the establishment of Innovation Schools that will implement Next Generation Learning Models; \$600,000 will be used to award planning and implementation grants to eligible applicants and partner districts, and the remaining \$50,000 will be used to provide technical assistance to school, district, and community teams.

Characteristics of Next Generation Learning Models

Next Generation Learning Models share the following characteristics:

- Differentiated content and multiple modes of instruction are provided to better meet the individual learning needs of all students;
- Educators assess each student's learning needs on an ongoing basis by comparing his/her current level of mastery of concepts or skills to rigorous college and career standards, then tailor instruction to boost achievement;
- Teachers, school leaders, and other adults have the opportunity to assume different instructional and leadership responsibilities, and everyone contributes to student learning;
- Inventive technology tools and models are used to enhance the quality of instruction and also provide students with different types of learning opportunities; and
- Educators use greater flexibility with regard to the content of instruction, the use of instructional time, and the allocation of financial and human resources to improve student achievement and promote school and district success.

The implementation of Next Generation Learning Models can have significant impact at different levels of the education system. Students will receive high-quality and rigorous content in ways that are tailored to their unique learning needs, and educators will have access to real-time data about student progress, access to new instructional models and tools, and the opportunity to expand their roles and responsibilities. At the school and district levels, the implementation of Next Generation Learning Models can promote the development of better systems to deliver differentiated instructional services to students, collect and analyze student data, and offer robust professional learning opportunities for educators.

Alignment with the Innovation Schools Initiative

The characteristics of Next Generation Learning Models are aligned with the core components of the Innovation School model as follows.

- Next Generation Learning Models are designed to provide students with high-quality and differentiated content, and multiple approaches to meet different learning needs.

The Innovation School model was designed to reduce persistent achievement gaps among different groups of students and promote the creation of different types of high-quality public schools. Educators working in Innovation Schools have greater flexibility to utilize their expertise and experience to implement differentiated strategies that will have positive impact on student achievement.

- Next Generation Learning Models emphasize the importance of providing real-time, actionable student data, new instructional tools, and high-quality professional development for all educators.

The flexibility with regard to student assessment, staffing configurations, and professional development provides educators in Innovation Schools with exciting opportunities to create new instructional and assessment strategies and continually build their capacity to respond to evolving needs.

- Next Generation Learning Models emphasize greater flexibility with regard to instruction and the allocation of resources.

The foundation of the Innovation School model is greater autonomy and flexibility with regard to instructional, staffing, and budgetary functions of public schools, and the implementation of creative strategies to best support student achievement and school performance.

Planning and Implementation Grants

The EOE will award a total of \$600,000 to eligible applicants and any school district in Massachusetts to support the establishment of Innovation Schools in September 2011.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) for the planning grants is available at the following website: <http://finance1.doe.mass.edu/Grants/grants11/rfp/154.html>. In order to be eligible to apply for these planning grants, applicants must first complete the first stage of the Innovation School authorization process – approval of the initial prospectus by two-thirds of the three-member screening committee (the local superintendent or designee, a local school committee member or designee, and a representative from the local teacher’s union). Innovation Schools that are established with this funding must implement Next Generation Learning Models; therefore, the initial prospectus must include a preliminary description of strategies that are aligned with the primary characteristics of these models. The RFP for the implementation grants will be issued during the spring of 2010.

For additional information about the Next Generation Learning Models and the planning and implementation grants, please contact Saeyun Lee (saeyun.lee@state.ma.us) or Nick Martinelli (nicholas.martinelli@state.ma.us) at the EOE.